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Posted on Sat, Apr. 27, 2002

Duluth News Tribune

Fond du Lac neighborhood utilities work may soon start

Duluth neighborhood

BY CHUCK FREDERICK
NEWS TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Work could begin as soon as June to extend water and sewer pipes into Duluth's far-western Fond du Lac neighborhood.

City councilors are expected to approve the construction contract by the middle of next month, city officials and others announced Friday. The Reuben Johnson and Son construction company of Superior submitted the lowest bid for the \$2.65 million project.

More than 50 Fond du Lac neighbors, city officials, politicians, media representatives and others attended Friday's announcement, which took the form of a press conference inside the Fond du Lac Community Church. Doughnuts and coffee were served. Dignitaries included U.S. Rep. James Oberstar, D-Chisholm.

Neighbors have been pushing at least four years for the utility extensions. The community's aging wooden water tank is leaking and falling into disrepair. A new sewer line would replace private septic systems. Some are outdated and failing.

Fond du Lac resident Tom Fearnall has been working on the extensions from the beginning. He said city engineers deserve a lot of credit.

"They bent over backward to accommodate our suggestions," said Fearnall, a member of the Fond du Lac Utilities Task Force. "They listened to our concerns and worked very hard to keep our costs down."

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This summer's extension work will come under a pair of projects.

The first, for \$950,000, would add about 75 homes to the city's water system. The money comes from assessments, some of which will be offset with federal Community Development Block Grants; \$350,000 from Duluth; and a \$500,000 grant Oberstar authored in the Water Resource Development Grant of 1999. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will oversee the grant.

The other project, for \$1.8 million, will connect 125 homes to the city's sanitary sewer system. The money comes from a \$500,000 low-interest loan from the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development and a grant of up to \$1.3 million from the department's Clean Water Fund.

A similar utility extension project is planned this summer in Duluth's far-eastern North Shore neighborhood. It is expected to cost \$13 million to connect about 430 homes and businesses.

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